

NERC Public Engagement Glossary of terms



The following definitions are as used by NERC, and provided for clarity for when NERC uses a term. We understand and accept that other organisations may use alternative definitions. We are grateful to all providers of these definitions. This is a live document and subject to change.

NERC recognises that a wide range of approaches and activities are needed in order to foster a thriving engagement landscape in the UK. This is similar to the views reflected by STFC in their Public Engagement: Attitudes, Culture and Ethos report,¹ which explored the attitudes of their research community towards engagement, and highlights some of the complexities of defining public engagement terms.”

Glossary of Terms

Public Engagement: NERC continues to use the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement’s broad definition of public engagement with research (based on consultation across the higher education sector):

“Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.”²

Collaborative research: Where academics and members of the public work together on research projects, to create knowledge collaboratively. This could be co-production (where you engage people throughout the process, from setting the research questions to sharing the results) or collaborative engagement, where you involve people in certain parts of the research programme e.g. citizen science.³

Citizen science: Citizen science is an important way in which diverse groups of people can participate and collaborate in research and innovation. This could include crowdsourcing data, working with volunteers to analyse existing datasets, collaborating with communities in designing research programmes, and approaches to innovation that involve diverse groups of people in the innovation process.⁴ It is important to highlight that “Citizen science is a rapidly growing field, often seen as a cluster of activities under a larger umbrella of concepts, including ‘open science’ and ‘open innovation’, citizen science expands public participation in science and supports alternative models of knowledge production.”⁵

Engaged research: Engaged research encompasses the different ways that researchers meaningfully interact with various stakeholders over any or all stages of a research process, from issue formulation, the production or co-creation of new knowledge, to knowledge evaluation and dissemination.⁶

¹ Public Engagement: Attitudes, Culture and Ethos: <https://stfc.ukri.org/files/corporate-publications/pe-attitudes-culture-ethos/>

² NCCPE: <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/what-public-engagement>

³ NCCPE: <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/quality-engagement/purpose>

⁴ UKRI crowdsourced definition, 2019

⁵ Hecker, S., Haklay, M., Bowser, A., Makuch, Z., Vogel, J. & Bonn, A. 2018. Citizen Science: Innovation in Open Science, Society and Policy. London: UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781787352339>

⁶ Grand, Ann; Davies, Gareth; Holliman, Richard and Adams, Anne (2015). [Mapping Public Engagement with Research in a UK University](#)

Impact: UKRI defines impact⁷ as the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. We aim to achieve research impact across all our activities. This can involve academic impact, economic and societal impact, or both:

- “*Academic impact*: the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application.”
- “*Economic and societal impacts*: The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. Economic and societal impacts embrace all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations”

In the context of the *Research Excellence Framework*, impact is “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia”⁸.

Knowledge exchange: conveys how knowledge and ideas move between the knowledge source and the potential users of that knowledge...The key common element is that information and expertise is exchanged with businesses, society and/or the economy.⁹

KEF: “The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is intended to increase efficiency and effectiveness in use of public funding for knowledge exchange, to further a culture of continuous improvement in universities by providing a package of support to keep English university knowledge exchange operating at a world class standard.”¹⁰ Public and community engagement is one of the seven different ‘perspectives’ – (broad domains within which universities typically exchange knowledge with wider society) which the KEF is currently organised around, which are research partnerships; working with business; working with the public and third sector; skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship; local growth and regeneration; IP and commercialisation; and public and community engagement.¹¹

Participatory research: “some degree of active involvement of a range of community stakeholders in research design, process and implementation (e.g. as research commissioners, advisory group members, co-researchers or peer researchers). In projects with ‘deep participation’, ownership lies with the community rather than outside researchers.”¹²

Public: is anyone beyond academia. It is essential to consider specifically who the ‘audience’ or ‘participant’ of engagement is, and it can be useful to consider the many types of organisations and intermediaries that this includes¹³.

Public dialogue: brings together non-experts, policy makers, scientists and other expert stakeholders to deliberate, reflect, and come to conclusions on national public policy issues.¹⁴

Public involvement: in research, this is defined as research that is done with or by the public and not to, about or for them¹⁵

⁷ UKRI Excellence with impact: <https://www.ukri.org/innovation/excellence-with-impact/>

⁸ Research England: <https://re.ukri.org/research/ref-impact/>

⁹ Vitae: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/leadership-development-for-principal-investigators-pis/intellectual-leadership/demonstrating-research-impact/knowledge-exchange>

¹⁰ Research England: <https://re.ukri.org/knowledge-exchange/knowledge-exchange-framework/>

¹¹ Knowledge exchange framework consultation: <https://re.ukri.org/documents/2019/kef-consultation/>

¹² Sarah Banks and the Durham Community Research Team: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/connected-communities/community-based-participatory-research-ethical-challenges/>

¹³ NCCPE: <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/who-are-public>

¹⁴ Sciencewise 2013

¹⁵ NIHR Involve: <https://www.invo.org.uk/find-out-more/what-is-public-involvement-in-research-2/>

Responsible research and innovation: is an approach that anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations with regard to research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation.”¹⁶

REF: The Research Excellence Framework (REF) “is the system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions.”¹⁷ REF guidance identifies engagement with the public as one of various routes by which research can underpin impact: ‘Sub-panels will welcome, and assess equitably, case studies describing impacts achieved through public engagement, either as the main impact described or as one facet of a wider range of impacts.”¹⁸

Science communication: (SciCom) may be defined as the use of appropriate skills, media, activities, and dialogue to produce [a] personal responses to science [such as] awareness, enjoyment, interest, opinion, understanding”¹⁹

TEF: “The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is a national exercise, introduced by the government in England. It assesses excellence in teaching at universities and colleges, and how well they ensure excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study.”²⁰

¹⁶ European Commission: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/responsible-research-innovation>

¹⁷ Research England: <https://www.ref.ac.uk/>

¹⁸ REF Panel Criteria and Working Methods: https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1084/ref-2019_02-panel-criteria-and-working-methods.pdf

¹⁹ Doran, Heather, Communication and Engagement Jargon:

https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/33896435/Public_Engagement_and_Communication_Jargon_Explained.pdf

²⁰ Office for Students: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/what-is-the-tef/>